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March 5, 1965
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TO: The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S *SWR*
FROM: FE -William P. Bundy
SUBJECT: U.S. Conditions for a Detente in Viet-Nam

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *R. H. [Signature]* DATE *10-2-82*

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The purpose of the present paper is to try to define how we might take the first political step away from the present confrontation with North Viet-Nam. It concerns itself only with the opening steps in any detente and is not intended to discuss succeeding steps which might be taken in more formal negotiations or an international conference.

If our present combination of political and military actions is successful we will in due course begin to receive indications from North Viet-Nam that they are ready to talk seriously about a detente in Viet-Nam. It is impossible to define in advance what the nature of these indications must be in order to persuade us that Hanoi is serious and to move us from our present position that "the essential element", i.e. their interest in a resolution, is still missing. Nevertheless we should at this time prepare for that moment by defining our own position on conditions. We must also determine the extent to which those conditions - i.e. the corrective actions which must be taken by North Viet-Nam - are to be posed by us as preconditions which must be fulfilled before we would be ready even to talk, directly or through intermediaries.

It is assumed for purposes of this paper that the Communist demands will be first for a cessation of US-SVN air attacks against NVN; they may pose this as a precondition for any kind of talks. They will also press for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from SVN, if not all then all but a small advisory group, and for an end to U.S. arms supply to SVN. They may well also pose as conditions the neutralization and non-alignment of SVN, its pledge not to call on SEATO for help, and conceivably the inclusion in the Government of SVN of representation from the Liberation Front.

It is recommended that our price for a cessation of air attacks be a cessation of NVN support of the Viet Cong in men and materiel. This should not be a matter of preconditions

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to talks since it will require talks to work out the manner in which we, the U.S., can be satisfied that such support by NVN has ceased. Until we are satisfied, we should not agree to call off the air attacks since once suspended in an atmosphere of anticipated detente it would be very difficult to resume them.

It will not be an easy matter to decide whether or not NVN has in fact stopped the flow of men and material from north to south. Probably the most practicable way to achieve this would be to charge the ICCs both in Laos and in Viet-Nam with carrying on a surveillance over the land and sea infiltration routes and the supply depots and training camps in NVN where the infiltration has its origins. In this process there is one key indicator of NVN intentions: the willingness to instruct the Pathet Lao to permit free ICC circulation and investigation in the PL-controlled areas in Laos. If this permission, which it has been impossible for the ICC to secure since the Geneva Accords were signed in 1962, were to be granted it would give reason to believe that NVN was more in earnest this time. While even with the ICC performing this surveillance some personnel and arms could slip through, North Vietnamese acceptance of surveillance, including on its own territory would probably be an adequate price for cessation of air attacks.

Other means of checking on NVN's compliance in a cessation of infiltration are hard to envisage, although one other possibility might be found in NVN's agreement to the free use of unarmed U.S. aircraft to carry out day and night, land and sea reconnaissance anywhere over NVN territory (or at least over the coast and the land area south of Vinh) and over the Laos panhandle, perhaps combined with agreement that if suspicious activity is noted, the ICC could be dispatched to investigate on the ground.

It might be that NVN would accept no such arrangements without exacting a higher price, such as the withdrawal of the bulk of US forces from SVN. This might be acceptable to us, since US forces could always be promptly deployed again in case of NVN non-compliance, especially if our withdrawal could be staged to postpone any substantial outward movement until a surveillance system in NVN and Laos was in reasonable operation. However, we should not accept unilateral US withdrawal but should insist that it be accompanied by the pulling back to North Viet-Nam of at least the NVN cadres who are leading and directing and providing the

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technical skills for the Viet Cong effort.

If arrangements somewhat as outlined above could be worked out, we should have moved into a state of detente in Viet-Nam which would considerably ease present international tensions. SVN would, of course, still face major tasks of pacification and internal stabilization but these could be undertaken with our help with much more promise of success than we see today. In working our way toward an effective compliance by NVN of the 1954 and 1962 Accords and some further military disengagement of the U.S. in SVN, fuller and more formal negotiations and perhaps a conference would perhaps be in order. That would be the time to introduce in specific terms the proposals for Mekong Valley or other types of economic development in Indochina, including NVN, which would have the objective of gradually weakening that country's links with Communist China. Such proposals, however, might well be foreshadowed in earlier general public statements.

Clearance:

FE - Marshall Green ^{mg}

cc: U - Mr. Ball
White House - Mr. Cooper
G - Ambassador Thompson
Ambassador Taylor - Saigon
FE-2

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